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THE BAPTISTS

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BY

REV. GEO. B. TAYLOR, D.D.

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MEMORIAL SERIES-NO. II.

THE BAPTISTS
AND
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

BY
REV. *Geo. S. Gardner* B. TAYLOR, D.D. 1832-1907
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PHILADELPHIA:
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
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THIS discourse ~~was~~ originally preached by the author to his Church, in Staunton, Virginia, and is now published substantially as delivered. No pretension is made to originality, but pains have been taken to secure accuracy of statement.

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II.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE BAPTISTS.

"But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."—*Acts* iv. 19.

"But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."—*Gal.* iv. 29.

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."—*John* xviii. 36.

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."—*Rom.* xiv. 4.

DO not propose to discuss these texts, but they are the ground-work of the doctrine of soul liberty.

Perhaps it may be queried, Why recall the past? I ask, What is the use of history? Besides, there has been great ignorance, even on the part of our own people, touching the

prowess and sufferings of our fathers, and we have Scripture precedent for rehearsing the deeds of those who have contended and suffered for the truth. Finally, be it observed, that our Saviour has said, 'By their fruits shall ye know them,' and we may judge of the character of principles by what they have wrought; and if we find that Baptist principles have borne good fruit, we may draw an argument in favor of their truth, though we are not to take any glory to ourselves. And just as we take no glory to ourselves, so I expressly disclaim casting odium on any now living, or holding *them* responsible for what those of their faith may have done in past ages. Should not friends of other denominations, and of no denomination, be willing to know the truth, and to give our fathers credit for what they achieved? Religious freedom now generally prevails. All in our land rejoice, and would not have it otherwise. If it can be shown that Baptists chiefly fought the battle, and won the boon for all, should not all be willing to award them the meed of praise which is their due?

A preliminary word is necessary as to the distinctive principles of the Baptists—some of those principles being *now* held by them in common with other denominations, but *always* held by

them. It is often asked, wonderingly, if not sneeringly, why Baptists make so much of water, and it is assumed that the question of more or less water is the great question on which they differ from other denominations. This is far from being the case. There are certain fundamental principles which they hold, and have ever held, and which have largely characterized them as a people: Christ Jesus, the sole Law-giver in spiritual things; the word of God, the only authoritative guide in religious faith and practice; the responsibility of each individual to God and to him alone, in all matters of conscience and religious worship; the restriction of church membership to persons making personal and credible profession of faith in Christ; and the independence of the churches of Christ. Hence they reject infant baptism, both because they find no warrant for it in the word of God, and because they believe that it tends to break down the distinction between the Church and the world, and interferes with the freedom of the individual, by fixing his church relations for him without his consent. They also insist upon the burial of the body in water, not because they attribute efficacy to water, little or much, but because such was the command and example of Christ, and

the practice of the Apostles, and there is neither safety nor fitness in any departure from the plain command of the one Lawgiver in Zion, and the practice of those inspired men under whom the first churches were formed.

I do not propose, in my discussion, to go back of the sixteenth century, partly because I wish to keep on ground which all will admit to be tenable, and partly because, even limiting myself to the consideration of the last 350 years, the subject and the materials are too vast to be disposed of in the space at my command. Nor shall I go into detail in reference to the sufferings and achievements of Virginia Baptists for soul liberty, partly for want of space, and partly because that is considered in another discourse of this series.

I submit three propositions:—

I. The Baptists have suffered from the violation of religious freedom by others.

II. The Baptists, and the Baptists alone, of Christian denominations who have existed for the period under consideration, have never violated religious freedom.

III. The Baptists, in every particular, stand forth pre-eminent as the champions of religious freedom.

AND THE BAPTISTS.

I. *The Baptists have suffered from the violation of religious freedom by others.*

This needs not to be *proved*; and for illustrations, the difficulty is not to find, but to select material. The Baptists have suffered, in common with other Christian denominations, for their faith as Christians; have suffered at the hands of wicked rulers, and of the Roman hierarchy. They have also suffered by themselves, and for their peculiar views as Baptists; have suffered at the hands of Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. And it is a noteworthy fact, that for nothing has more persecution been suffered, than for the rejection of infant baptism. It is indeed a strong presumption against this rite, that to so great an extent have carnal weapons been used in its defence, and severe persecution been inflicted by its supporters upon its opponents.

Hear the following testimony from Mosheim. I quote from Dr. Maclaine's translation, vol. ii. p. 130. After distinguishing between the rebellious, fanatical Anabaptists, and those, to quote his own words, who were "free from any other reproach than the errors they maintained, and their too ardent desire of spreading them among the multitude," he goes on to say, still speaking of the Anabaptists as a class: "In almost all the

countries of Europe, an unspeakable number of those unhappy wretches preferred death in its worst forms, to a retraction of their errors. Neither the view of the flames, that were kindled to consume them, nor the ignominy of the gibbet, nor the terrors of the sword, could shake their invincible but ill-placed constancy, or make them abandon tenets that seemed to them dearer than life and all its enjoyments. The Mennonites have preserved voluminous records of the lives, actions, and unhappy fate of those of their sect who suffered for the crimes of rebellion or heresy which were imputed to them. Certain it is that they were treated with severity, and it is much to be lamented that so little distinction was made between the members of this sect, when the sword of justice was unsheathed against them. Why were the innocent and the guilty involved in the same fate? Why were doctrines, purely theological, or at worst, fanatical, punished with the same rigor that was shown to crimes inconsistent with the peace and welfare of civil society? Those who had no other marks of peculiarity than their administering baptism to adult persons only, and their excluding unrighteous persons from the external communion of the Church, ought undoubtedly to have met with milder

treatment than that which was given to sc̄ditionary incendiaries."

Mosheim does not appear to be sound on religious freedom; he evidently thinks that these Baptists, though punished too severely, ought to have been punished for their heresy. But let us continue to hear his testimony:

"Many Anabaptists suffered death, not on account of their being considered rebellious subjects, but merely because they were judged to be incorrigible heretics; for," he adds, "in this century (*i. e.* the sixteenth), the error of limiting the administration of baptism to adult persons only, and the practice of re-baptizing such as had received that sacrament in infancy, were looked upon as most flagitious and intolerable heresies."

The details of the sufferings of the Baptists for their opinions are heart-sickening, yet fill us with admiration for their piety and heroism. In Germany "they were plundered, thrust into dungeons, banished, and numbers of them beheaded or burned alive." "Ferdinand, King of Hungary and Bohemia, 1527, issued an edict denouncing death to the Baptists." By the edict embodying the decisions of the Diet of Spire, it was "ordained that every Anabaptist, or re-baptized

person, male or female, being of ripe years and understanding, should be deprived of life." "The Emperor Charles V., evinced his malignity by procuring civil edicts at German Diets. In 1544, when other Protestants were treated with leniency, severe measures were adopted against the Baptists. At Augsburg, 1551, extermination was threatened against them, and priests and people united to put it into execution." "Torture was frequently employed to wring from the sufferers the names and abodes of their associates, or to force them, under the pressure of anguish, to renounce their faith." "Two young females, who had been recently baptized, were imprisoned and severely tortured, but they did not swerve from the truth. When they were led out to die, wreaths of straw were placed on their heads, by way of contempt and mockery. 'Since Christ,' said one of them, 'wore for us a crown of thorns, why should we not in return, and for his honor, wear this crown of straw? Our faithful God will, instead of this, set a beautiful crown of gold and a glorious garland upon our heads.' So they went cheerfully to the fire." Johannes Bair lay in prison twenty years. He wrote to his brethren from a dark hole, begging piteously for a Bible, saying for

the want of it he had endured great hunger and thirst. Soon thereafter he died, and obtained the martyr's crown. But many of the details of the tortures of the German Baptists are too harrowing, too horrible.

It is little better in Switzerland. At Zurich, in 1525, the Magistracy issued an edict prohibiting believers' baptism, enjoining infant baptism, and threatening severely the disobedient. And they were thus dealt with, being imprisoned and banished. Still they persevered, and in 1526 it was ordered that if any baptized others, or submitted to baptism (re-baptism they called it), they should be "drowned without mercy." Zwingli approved of this; and Felix Mantz, his intimate friend, and a learned and pious man, was first imprisoned and then drowned, for *holding and practising believers' baptism*. Many other Baptist ministers in Switzerland were drowned and burned; not for rebellion, not for other heresy, but for opposition to infant baptism. The meetings of the Baptists were held in secret, in the woods, and under cover of the night. Finally they left the country in large numbers, going to Moravia, where, for a season, they were tolerated. But, though their industry, honesty, and peaceableness commanded respect, Ferdinand was per-

suaded to expel them. "It was summer ; harvest time was near, and the vintage would follow shortly afterwards, and humanity would have dictated that if justice demanded the banishment of these men, they should have the opportunity of gathering in the produce of their labors, and so be provided with the means of sustenance for themselves and their families during the coming winter." Instead, they were ordered to depart within three weeks and three days, on pain of death if they were found even in the border of the country, after the prescribed time.

The historian Robinson, as quoted by Cramp, says : "Heaven (Cramp, 267) had smiled on their earnest labors ; their fields stood thick with corn, and the sun and dew were improving every moment to give them their last polish. The yellow ears waved a homage to their owners, and the wind whistled through the stems, and the russet herbage softly said, 'Put in the sickle, the harvest is come.' Their luxuriant vine leaves, too, hung aloft by tendrils mantling over the clustering grapes, like watchful parents over their tender offspring ; but all were fenced by an imperial edict, and it was instant death to approach. Without leaving one murmur upon record, in solemn, silent submission to the power that gov-

erns the universe, and causes all things to 'work together for good,' they packed up and departed. In several hundred carriages they conveyed their sick, their innocent, new-born infants at the breasts of their mothers, and their decrepid parents, whose work was done, and whose silvery locks told every one that they wanted only the favor of a grave. At the borders they filed off, some to Hungary, some to Transylvania, some to Wallachia, and others to Poland—greater, far greater, for their virtue, than Ferdinand for all his titles, and for all his glory."

In the Netherlands, the hand of oppression was heavy on the Baptists, and that too for their distinctive religious tenets. The following sentence is recorded in the sentence book of the Court of Friesland: "Sicke Freerks, on this 20 March, 1531, is condemned by the Court, to be executed with the sword; his body shall be laid on the wheel, and his head set upon a stake, *because he has been rebaptized, and persevered in that baptism.*" In 1532, three were burned at the Hague. By edicts published in the following year, all persons were forbidden to harbor Baptist preachers in Holland; and Baptists refusing to recant were to be slain.

"On the 10th of June, 1535, a furious decree

was published at Brussels. Death by fire was the punishment of all Baptists who should be detected, and should refuse to abjure. If they recanted, they were still to die, but not by fire; the men were to be put to death by the sword, 'the women in a sunken pit.' Those who failed to deliver up Baptists were to suffer the same punishment as accomplices. Informers were promised one-third of the confiscated estates. And all persons were forbidden 'to claim or seek any grace, forgiveness, or reconciliation for the said Anabaptists, or to present any petitions on their behalf; it being understood,' says the emperor, 'that it is not our will that any Anabaptists (because of their *wicked opinions*) shall be received into favor, but be punished, as a warning to others, without any dissimulation, favor, or delay.'—Cramp, p. 197.

When the Inquisition was introduced into the Netherlands, in 1550, by Charles V., the remonstrances of the people were such as to compel some relaxation of the severity, but there was no relaxation toward the Baptists. "Protestants and Papists united to persecute *them*."

Under Philip II., the edict was renewed, with additional articles: "The publication of Baptist books was prohibited, and the right of disposing

of their property by sale or will was taken away." Subsequently, it was decreed that no settler should come into Holland without proof that his children had been baptized according to the rites of Rome. Those attending at the birth of children were to be sworn to secure the christening of every infant at whose birth they were present, or to report neglect to the magistrates.

"The Baptist martyrology contains distinct notices of about 400 brethren and sisters, barbarously put to death under the aforesaid edicts."

"The torture was constantly resorted to, either to force a recantation, or to procure the discovery of the hiding-places of the brethren. The victims were stretched on the rack, or thumb screws were employed, or a similar instrument applied to the ankles." No regard was paid "to sex, station, or age. The delicate maiden, the honored minister, the venerable confessor of threescore and ten," suffered alike.

And these sufferings were not for crime, not for sedition, but for religious opinions. These men and women were of irreproachable morals, innocent and unoffending. Some of them suffered for their rejection of Romish errors, in common with the other Reformers: many, as we have

seen, even with the approval of the Reformers, for their opinions and practices on baptism.

These facts are in reference to the Continent. Turn we to England, the same melancholy view is presented.

In 1534, Henry VIII., in assuming the headship of the English Church, issued a proclamation, commanding foreigners who had been baptized in infancy, and had renounced that baptism and been rebaptized, to leave the realm in twelve days, on pain of death if they remained. It seems that certain Dutch Baptists braved the threatened punishment; for twenty-six were, in different places, and at different dates, burned within a few years. Bishop Latimer said in a sermon before Edward VI.: "The Anabaptists that were burnt here in divers towns in England went to their death even *intrepide*, as ye will say, without any fear in the world, cheerfully. *Well, let them go.*"

"The hatred of Baptists was further shown by excepting them from general acts of pardon. Such acts were published in 1538, '40, and '50, but those who held that infants should not be baptized were excluded. Thieves and vagabonds shared the king's favor, but Baptists were not to be tolerated."

Under Edward VI., many Baptists suffered extreme punishment, Cranmer and Latimer, and Ridley and John Rogers either approving or actually assisting as inquisitors. Some of these sufferers were ladies of culture and piety, and remarkable for their benevolence and active Christian zeal. They died for no fault, but simply for their opinions.

Under Bloody Mary, a good proportion of the martyr blood that flowed was from the veins of Baptists; and many of our name "passed to heaven through the fire."

Elizabeth began her reign, following in the footsteps of her father, and commanded all holding the opinions of the Anabaptists to depart the realm within twenty days, under severe penalties. In 1575, April 3d, just outside the gates of London, a congregation of Dutch Baptists was met in a private house. They were interrupted, and twenty-five arrested and tried before a commission, of which the Bishop of London was the head. Four doctrinal questions were proposed to them, one being: "Ought not little children to be baptized?" Answer: "Not so; we find it not written in the Holy Scripture." They were put in prison. Five recanted. "Fourteen women and a youth were sent out of

the country; the youth was whipped from the prison to the wharf." The rest were put in heavy irons in a damp, filthy dungeon in Newgate. One sunk under the confinement. Two were burned at Smithfield, by warrant of the Protestant Elizabeth, their crime *opinion*. One of these was an aged man and poor, with nine children depending on him, and his first wife had been martyred in Ghent, and his second wife was the widow of a martyr.

I might thus go on through the reigns of the next sovereigns of England, rehearsing the sufferings of the Baptists for their *opinions*; sometimes opinions held in common with other Christians; often for the tenets peculiar to them as Baptists. Even after death ceased to be *judicially* inflicted for religion, multitudes languished out their lives in Newgate, and were as truly martyrs as their predecessors at Smithfield. Among those so suffering was Delaune. It seems that Dr. Calamy had challenged the Nonconformists to a discussion of the points at issue between them and the Church of England. Delaune accepted the challenge and wrote a Plea for the Nonconformists, of which Defoe says: "the book is perfect." For this book he was tried at the Old Bailey, and Jeffries was on the Bench. He was

sent to Newgate, and his wife and two children went with him. First the wife and little ones died, and then death released him.

One of the most interesting objects visited by me during my sojourn in England was Broadmead Chapel, Bristol. It was so, not chiefly because Hall and Ryland had ministered there, but from the trials through which that church had passed from 1660, for a quarter of a century. Their meetings were continually interrupted, and ministers and members were fined and imprisoned. For some time, the pastor preached from his window in the fourth story of the jail. They also met for months in lanes and highways, and in the forests; and all sorts of devices, some of them exceedingly ingenious, were adopted to escape their persecutors, and still hold their services. Their spirit appeared in their resolution that those members absenting themselves through fear should be dealt with as disorderly members. One of their pastors languished for nearly three years in prison and then died there, a true martyr. This was in the reign of Charles II., and during his reign the jails of England were filled with Baptist martyrs and confessors.

Did time permit, we might see many scenes similar to these in New England, and even in

Virginia during this period. But I hasten to my second proposition.

II. *The Baptists and the Baptists alone, of denominations in existence during the period considered, never persecuted.*

Suffering themselves for religion, they never, never persecuted others. It is hard to prove a negative, but the challenge is confidently made to find a single instance in which the Baptists persecuted others. It cannot be done. Persecuted by others, they have themselves never in the slightest degree violated the great principles of religious freedom. While their own blood has been freely shed for their opinions, their hands are innocent of the blood of others. No martyr blood stains their garments, nor have they ever assumed any position or held any tenet subversive of soul liberty.

When this has been urged, as it could not be denied, it has been common to say, "The reason is that the Baptists have never had the power; had they possessed the opportunity, they would have done as the rest." But herein are two grand mistakes.

First: it is not true that Baptists have never had the power to exercise control in State, to be supported by the State, and to be, to say the least,

intolerant of others. I will mention several instances.

Rhode Island was founded under Baptist auspices. Had Roger Williams and his people desired peculiar privileges or monopolies or immunities, they might have had them. Had they chosen to exclude those who had persecuted and banished him, they might have done so. Had they chosen to establish the Baptist denomination, and visit pains and penalties on all dissenting from their faith, they might have done so. Had they chosen to punish infant baptism, as others had done its neglect, they might have done so. On the contrary, "in the code of laws established by them," says Judge Story, "we read for the first time since Christianity ascended the throne of the Cæsars, the declaration that conscience should be free, and men should not be punished for worshiping God in the way they were persuaded he requires."

And repeated are the instances in which State patronage has been, not only offered, but pressed upon the Baptists, and refused by them *on principle*.

In Virginia, in 1784, when the Baptists had well nigh conquered in their struggle for religious freedom, a compromise was proposed in the

form of the famous assessment bill. Every one was to be taxed to support religion, but to have the liberty of saying to which denomination his tax was to be applied. The Baptists saw that this was an alliance of Church and State, and that in it lurked the germ of persecution—that it was, in fact, persecution; and though they had as much to gain by it as any other people, inasmuch as their principles were rapidly spreading, they not only declined for themselves, but earnestly protested against and opposed it; and though part of the time—yea, in the pinch of the conflict—they stood as a denomination almost alone, they succeeded in defeating it.

In Georgia, in 1785, a law for the establishment and support of religion was actually passed, through the influence of the Episcopalians. It embraced all denominations and gave all equal privileges; but the very same year, the Baptists remonstrated against it, sent two messengers to the legislature, and it was promptly repealed. In both ministers and members they were the most numerous denomination; and their ministers might have lived on the public treasury, and occupied every neighborhood, but they knew that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and preferred to pine in poverty, as many of them

did, rather than consent to the unholy marriage of the Church and State.

Once more. In Holland, about the beginning of the present century, the king of that country, influenced largely by the history of the Dutch Baptists, written by Ypeig and Dermont, offered the Baptists the patronage and support of the State, and they declined the alliance—declined it *on principle*.

I have thus, by four historical instances, disproved the charge, that Baptists have never wielded the sword and held the purse of State *simply because they have not had the power*.

But there is still another way of dealing with this charge. The principles of the Baptists—their fundamental principles—those principles without which they would not be Baptists—forbid such a course, and render it impossible. Their views of the individuality of religion and the spirituality of Christ's Kingdom, compel them to be the champions of religious freedom. Just as they would not baptize an unconscious child, so they would not compel an adult to profess either religion, or any form of it; regarding both as essentially inconsistent with the individualism of religion and the unworldliness of Christ's Church. I do not suppose that there is

any essential difference in human nature, the world over. Like the atmosphere, its constitution is the same always and everywhere. The men who were on the Northern side in the late war might have been on the Southern, and *vice versa*, had only their circumstances, their training, their principles, been exchanged. And so, no doubt, the very men who have been Baptists might have been hierarchists and persecutors—that is, if their fundamental principles had been reversed; in other words, if they had not been Baptists. But it is impossible for those imbued with and holding Baptist sentiments to be other than in favor of soul freedom.

And now I come to the other part of my proposition: Not only have Baptists never been allied to the State and never persecuted, but they are the only denomination of Christians of whom this is true. I, of course, expressly except those denominations which have come into existence since the universal recognition of the doctrine of soul liberty.

Dr. Underhill, of London, in his “Struggles and Triumphs of Religious Liberty,” says: “There is not a confession of faith nor a creed framed by any of the Reformers which does not give to the magistrate coercive power in religion, and almost

every one at the same time curses the resisting Baptists. . . . Not a Reformer of any eminence can be named who did not take part in this crusade;—Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Bucer, Bullinger, Calvin, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and many more. Whether the Baptists were confounded in disputation or not, the burden of the song is, that at the last, ‘the magistrates asserted their authority.’ The right of reading the Scriptures and judging for one’s self was professed by the Reformers, but their practical denial of it is written in the blood of the Baptists.”

We have seen how Episcopacy kindled its fires at Smithfield, and how the very men who afterwards suffered as Protestant martyrs under Bloody Mary, had themselves led Baptists to the stake.

Presbyterianism was not less intolerant. The Edinburgh Convention, which framed the articles of Church polity, declared certain Ecclesiastical offenders worthy of death. They declare that the maintaining of certain feasts and fasts, Christmas, Epiphany, etc., “ought not to escape the punishment of the civil magistrate”—“intolerance which drew from Milton the famous sarcasm, ‘New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.’” Cramp says: “The Presbyterians of

the seventeenth century held toleration in abhorrence. It was in their eyes the quintessence of all heresy." Baxter said: "I abhor unlimited liberty and toleration of all," and he declared himself able to prove the wickedness of it. The Scotch Presbyterian Parliament declared it would never admit toleration of any sects or schisms contrary to the solemn league and covenant. The Presbyterian ministers of London declared that they hated toleration, accounting it unlawful and pernicious. "Even John Knox, the father of Scotch Presbyterianism, hunted as he had been, in 1560, wrote a treatise in defence of the persecution of the Baptists." Calvin wrote: "Godly princes may lawfully issue edicts for compelling obstinate and rebellious persons to worship the true God, and to maintain the unity of the faith." He burned Michael Servetus, the Spaniard, for heresy. Luther, in a letter to Menius and Myconius, in 1530, says: "I am pleased that you intend to publish a book against the Anabaptists as soon as possible. Since they are not only blasphemous, but also seditious men, *let the sword exercise its rights over them.*" Zwingle declares that whoever submitted to immersion, after having been sprinkled, should be drowned. The very Puritans, fleeing from per-

secution to New England shores, became persecutors.

Among these Pedobaptist persecutors and defenders of persecution are many whom we delight to honor for much that was good in them, and for much good accomplished by them. But, whatever they did or were, it cannot be denied that they were persecutors and the defenders of persecution, and that they had no adequate conception of soul freedom. We are careful to affirm that, as men and as Christians, they may have been equal to any Baptists, and that their views and course on this subject were due to certain false principles which they held. It is certainly a very remarkable and significant fact, account for it as we may, that the body of Christians contending for believers' baptism has never persecuted, and that all the denominations which reject it have done so. It would seem that there must be some connection between infant baptism, certainly as *formerly* administered, and persecution. Dr. Underhill says: "The Church, with the Reformers, was not the segregation of the good in bonds of holy amity and alliance with each other and the Lord, from the mass of pollution reigning around them, but embraced in its maternal arms all who, at any age, had been

sealed as the Church's own, whether they were helpless infants or strangers to the power of spiritual truth. It was sufficient that they bore the magic mark which, it was asserted, made them children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Such a Church might be constituted by human agencies; it was in human power to effect it; and accordingly, by the secular arm, the Reformers sought to frame it." I ask, moreover, if it be not a violation of the principle of religious freedom—of soul liberty—to attempt to fix the religious status of a child before he can decide upon the subject—to fix it not by argument, but by a rite imposed upon him in his unconsciousness; specially when, as is often the case, that rite is afterwards held up as an obstacle to his obeying Christ by being baptized on his personal faith? Should an objector ask, "Why is not Pedobaptism now accompanied by the intolerance which accompanied it in the past, if there be a connection between the two?" several answers might be given. First, the spirit of the age is different. The doctrine of religious freedom having obtained ground, holds it, in spite of practices, to some extent inconsistent with it. Second, infant baptism is far less prevalent than it once was. Even among nominally Pedobap-

tist denominations, it is much less generally practised than formerly. And, finally, the old ground on which it was based, is largely abandoned, and the greatest contrariety of opinion exists among those who practise it, as to its significance and the status of the baptized child.

It may possibly be plead, in extenuation of the errors and crimes of the men to whom we have referred, that these crimes and errors were in accordance with the age in which they lived ; that these men were not behind their age, but fully abreast of it, and animated only by its spirit. Granted ! Then, the Baptists who, in that very age, plead, not merely for deliverance for themselves—for which they would have deserved little credit—but for equal religious freedom for all ;—the Baptists must have been *before* their age. They were. Many of them were simple, humble people, yet, imbued with the spirit of that Book which is for all ages, they grasped the doctrine of soul liberty, and held it firmly. They were not only sufferers by reason of the violation of religious freedom by others, but also—and this is my last proposition—

III. *The Baptists were its first, staunchest, and most consistent champions.*

They anticipated Dr. Watts—

“Let Cæsar’s dues be ever paid
To Cæsar and his throne;
But conscience and the soul were made
To be the Lord’s alone.”

The first modern treatise ever written upon Religious Liberty was by Leonard Busher, a Baptist, in 1614. Its title is “Religious Peace, or a Plea for Liberty of Conscience.” It is no plea for mere toleration, but a demand for liberty of conscience for every human being. Take some of its words to witness: “That it may be lawful for every person, or persons, yea, Jews, Turks, Pagans; and Papists, to write, dispute, confer and reason, print and publish any matter, touching any religion, either for or against whomsoever.” Can the nineteenth century, for fulness of freedom, can 1873 surpass that? Nor are these the sentiments of a single man merely. Three years before, the Baptist Confession of Faith, then published, used this language: “We believe that the magistrate is not to meddle with religion or matters of conscience, nor compel men to this or that form of religion, *because Christ is the King and Lawgiver of the Church and the conscience.*” Can the doctrine of religious freedom be put upon any better, or other basis now? But for more than one hundred

years, the Baptists had been petitioning for religious freedom, equal rights for all. From the time of Henry VIII. to William III., a full century and a half, the Baptists struggled to gain a footing, and to secure toleration, not only for themselves, but for all, on the broad basis of liberty of conscience. From 1611—as appears from the documents recently republished by the Hansard Knollys Society—they issued appeal after appeal, addressed to the king, the parliament, the people, in behalf of this soul liberty, written with a breadth of view and force of argument hardly since exceeded. In *Appleton's American Cyclopædia*, in the article "Baptists," Mr. Locke says: "The Baptists were from the first the friends of liberty; just and true liberty; equal and impartial liberty."

Leonard Busher's treatise, already quoted from, was republished in 1642, prefaced by an address to the Presbyterian people, and begging them to abate their misguided eagerness in prosecuting their conscientious brethren.

In 1615, the year after Busher's first edition, another tract appeared. Its title is, "Persecution for Religion judged and condemned by Christ's unworthy Witnesses, his Majesty's faithful Subjects, commonly but most falsely, called Anabaptists."

It says, "Earthly authority belongeth to earthly kings; but spiritual authority belongeth to that one spiritual King who is King of kings."

In 1620, the year the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, another treatise was published by those calling themselves "Your Majesty's loyal Subjects, unjustly called Anabaptists." Its title is, "A most humble Supplication of many of the King's loyal Subjects, who are persecuted only for differing in Religion." "The work was written in Newgate prison. Its authors were denied ink and paper, but some friends, who supplied them with milk, put paper instead of corks in the milk bottles, and milk was used instead of ink. The writing, afterwards held to a fire, became legible, and was copied. Roger Williams said, that their arguments were written in milk and answered in blood."

Many other works followed, all of the earliest by Baptists. In those days no others advocated religious liberty.

Episcopalians claim for Jeremy Taylor the honor of being first to advocate soul liberty; but, in the first place, his plea is only for toleration; he had not reached the idea of freedom. And, moreover, his treatise was issued nearly forty years after that of Leonard Busher, which was

published when Taylor was but a year old. Even the first *American* treatise preceded it by several years. Bancroft says of Roger Williams' work on soul liberty, "In its defence he was the precursor and superior of Jeremy Taylor; for Taylor limited his toleration to a few Christian sects; the philanthropy of Williams compassed the earth."

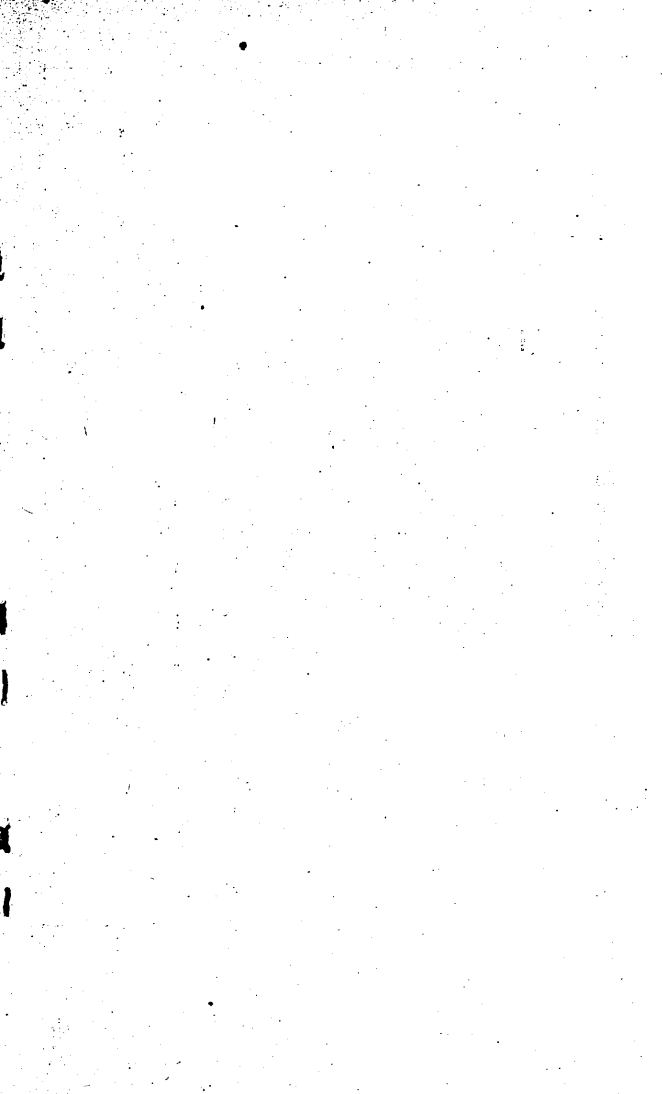
The honor has been claimed for the Presbyterians. But the Scotch Presbyterian League, relied on by those preferring the claim, was not only made years after the Baptist utterances named, but it was far behind them in its tone—nay, it bound its signers to persecute Papists and Prelatists, and was designed to establish a national church.

The first treatise written on this continent claiming full religious freedom was by Roger Williams, in 1644, and called, "The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for cause of Conscience, etc." John Cotton, a Pedobaptist preacher, answered it, defending the right of compulsion. In 1647, Williams replied to Cotton in another treatise, called, "The Bloody Tenet yet more bloody, by Mr. Cotton's Endeavor to wash it white."

As a specimen of the sentiment of the day, hear the following from Cotton: "If men be

found to walk in the way of the wicked, their brethren may deprive them, in some cases, not only of the common air of the country by banishment, but even of the common air of the world by death, and yet (!) hope to live with them eternally in the heavens."

Singularly enough, pre-eminence has been claimed for the Roman Catholics and Lord Baltimore in the championship of religious freedom in this country. But a moment's candid consideration will show that such a claim cannot be sustained. Leaving out of view the fact that the doctrine of soul liberty was established in Rhode Island two years before the first enactment in Maryland, it must be observed that Lord Baltimore proposed, not liberty, but mere toleration; and that even this toleration was so partial that the very statute providing it punished sundry heretical opinions and utterances with fines, imprisonment, whipping, banishment, death. Lord Baltimore may have been a kind-hearted man, and he certainly was, either from policy, or principle, or amiability, vastly ahead of many Papists; but who will, with the page of history open, name him in the same category with Roger Williams?



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